



THERMOSTAT RECYCLING CORPORATION

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Contractor Notification
Announcing a New Program to Help You Recycle
Out-of-Service Wall-Mounted Mercury Thermostats

ATTENTION: Contractor Principal / Service Managers and Technicians

Today, environmental awareness and recycling are becoming more a part of our everyday lifestyle. People are actively involved in recycling their own household wastes. Our industry is sensitive to environmental concerns and to our customers' needs.

To address these concerns and needs we are pleased to announce that we have initiated a wall-mounted mercury thermostat-recycling program to provide contractors with an avenue to recycle out-of-service mercury switch thermostats throughout the US mainland.

HVAC contractors anywhere in your state can now recycle mercury thermostats. The program will utilize the existing wholesaler network by providing a collection container at participating wholesaler locations in your state. This means that all you need to do is return your out-of-service wall-mounted mercury thermostats to any participating HVAC wholesaler in your state. A list of participating wholesalers can be found at www.nema.org/government/environment. There is no cost to you for this program. Note: in warranty thermostats should continue to be handled under current manufacturer warranty programs.

The Thermostat Recycling Corporation that was established by Honeywell, White-Rodgers, and General Electric, will operate the program. The TRC will accept any wall-mounted mercury switch thermostat.

A question and answer sheet is attached entitled, "Your Thermostat," which you may use to respond to consumer inquiries, as well as a sheet containing answers to questions you may have about this program.

We hope you will take advantage of this program and demonstrate your own environmental stewardship.

Sincerely,

Ric Erdheim
Executive Director



Answers to Contractor Questions About Recycling Wall-Mounted Mercury Thermostats

Why is the HVAC industry doing this?

We want to see every used wall-mounted mercury thermostat recycled. This is good for the environment because it prevents contaminating materials from potentially entering the environment. It's good for consumers and HVAC contractors because it provides a convenient way to dispose of used mercury thermostats. Our industry has the infrastructure needed to recycle a very high percentage of used mercury thermostats.

What specifically is my role?

Whenever you replace a wall-mounted mercury thermostat for service or upgrade, retain the old thermostat. When you make routine visits to your wholesaler, place these used thermostats in the green plastic container, which the wholesaler will have placed somewhere in each participating branch.

Should the mercury bulbs be separated from the thermostats and returned for recycling?

No. It is important to return the entire thermostat since it provides protection for the mercury bulb during shipment.

Loose bulbs will not be accepted under this program. If you have loose bulbs, you should call your county waste disposal office.

Leaking thermostats will not be accepted under this program. If you have leaking thermostats, you should call your local waste management authority.

Am I subject to any liability for participating?

No. This program is operated in accordance with the Universal Waste Rule. The Universal Waste Rule specifically allows you to collect used thermostats from jobs and to hold and transport them for recycling.

Does the recovered mercury offset the cost of recycling?

No. When used thermostats are shipped to the processing center, the mercury switches are removed and sent to a recovery facility where the mercury is actually recovered and made available for reuse. TRC pays a fee to the recovery facility in addition to allowing them to retain the recovered mercury.

Is there any cost?

There is no cost to you for this program. Costs are born by the Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC).

What should I do if a homeowner brings me a wall-mounted thermostat that they have removed themselves?

We request that you accept it and drop it off at your wholesaler with your other recovered thermostats.

Are there other ways for a consumer to handle a used thermostat?

Yes. They could call their local waste management authority; many local governments have provided for mercury waste disposal by consumers.

What about in warranty thermostats?

Do not mix used, out-of-warranty thermostats with warranty product. If a mercury thermostat fails in warranty, tag it using normal in-warranty tagging procedures and return it to your wholesaler or manufacturer for a replacement. If you place in-warranty products in the recycling bins, you and your wholesaler will not receive warranty credit or replacement.

Is there anything I need to do to comply with the recycling program?

Yes. Bring the thermostats to a wholesaler who is participating in the program. You cannot transport more than 100 thermostats at a time or hold them for more than 10 days.



Your thermostat: Answers to consumer questions about recycling wall-mounted mercury thermostats

What happens to the old thermostat that my dealer removed?

The mercury inside your old thermostat will be removed, recycled and used again in new thermostats or other products. This recycling program is made possible through the cooperation of contractors, wholesalers and manufacturers who are committed to the responsible handling of mercury and the protection of the environment.

Is my thermostat safe?

Yes, mercury-containing thermostats are safe. In normal use, the consumer is never exposed to the mercury, which is entirely contained in a glass bulb. Thermostats are specifically designed to protect and hold the mercury inside. The mercury bulb is strong and durable and is attached to a metal strip that absorbs shocks. A sturdy thermostat casing protects the bulb. Nevertheless, it's prudent to handle thermostats with care.

How does the mercury work inside a thermostat?

Mercury's unique characteristics make it extremely effective as a switch in a thermostat. Because of its excellent conductivity and high surface tension, the mercury rolls freely inside the glass tube of a mercury switch. As it moves within the switch, the mercury breaks or makes electrical circuits, which signal the call for heating or cooling from a furnace or air conditioner.

Do all thermostats contain mercury?

No, there are several thermostat technologies that do not use mercury. These include electronic, snap-action, reed switch and vapor-filled diaphragm thermostats. Each model has different features, impacts the environment and must be managed responsibly when removed from service.

Why is mercury used in thermostats?

Mercury has many unique properties that make it extremely effective in the mercury switches used in thermostats and other products. The heating, ventilating and air conditioning industry recognizes mercury thermostats for their accuracy, reliability and long life. Scientists have found no feasible substitute for mercury, despite extensive—and continuing—research.

It's important to remember that environmental issues are often complex. *Every* product uniquely impacts the environment in terms of use of raw or recycled materials, manufacturing and assembly processes, packaging, length of service and energy requirements, to list a few.

Mercury-containing thermostats are very popular. They provide excellent performance and value: quiet operation, efficient switching for accurate temperature control and many years of service with little or no maintenance.

In addition, mercury from thermostats is easily recycled. Our goal is to see that mercury from all residential wall-mounted thermostats is recycled. Virtually all the mercury used in the manufacture of thermostats in the United States is from recycled sources.